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BACKGROUND, ORGANIZATION AND PROGRAMMES OF THE
LATIN AMERICAN CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DOCUMENTATION

Conference document

I. BACKGROUND

1. In March 1969, Mr. B. J. Udink, Minister of Economic Co-operation of the Netherlands, offered to finance the establishment of a Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation which would fulfil information and research functions for ECLA and the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), and would satisfy the needs of the Latin American Governments and of researchers all over the world. With this end in view, the Government of the Netherlands offered a donation of 500,000 dollars to defray the cost of erecting a building and purchasing equipment for the Centre, besides an allocation of funds for the services of an expert to carry out a feasibility study. Recently, the Netherlands Government offered an additional donation of 150,000 dollars for maintaining the Centre in the first two years. In December 1970 the Secretary-General of the United Nations accepted the donations for building and equipping the Centre and the additional donation for its maintenance in the initial stages.
2. ECLA carried out several preliminary studies for the establishment of the Documentation Centre,^{1/} prior to the feasibility study entrusted to the Netherlands expert, Dr. Verhoeven.^{2/} In addition, a meeting of

1/ ECLA, Centro regional de información y documentación para América Latina, Informe primario, 28 February 1969; Informe segundo, 3 November 1969; Informe tercero, 10 April 1970. ECLA, La recepción y transmisión de información en las empresas, information document No. 3 presented at the Meeting of Experts on Administration of Public Enterprises in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, Chile, 17-22 November 1969).

2/ Dr. F. R. J. Verhoeven, "Feasibility study for the establishment of a regional information, documentation and research centre, Part I: General survey" (ECLA, Santiago, 2 September 1970); "Part II: Information annexes" (8 October 1970).

experts ^{3/} examined the feasibility study and stressed the importance of the establishment of a documentation and reference centre for the sectoral and over-all development of Latin America.

3. As a result of the above-mentioned activities and studies, the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation (Centro Latinoamericano de Documentación Económica y Social - GLADES) began to operate in ECLA on 1 January 1971.

II. GENERAL CONCEPTIONS

4. The general conception of the activities of the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation is as follows:

(a) ECLA, like other international agencies, should have a more comprehensive knowledge of its own information resources, which are found in its library, substantive units, registry and depositories, and so integrate them that they can be put to greater use both inside and outside the Commission;

(b) New focal points of economic and social interest are constantly arising, e.g., contamination of the environment, utilization of maritime resources, sea water desalination, techniques for exploiting desert areas, and use of atomic, solar, geothermic and other types of energy, which call for perfect co-ordination between economic and social documentation on the one hand, and scientific and technological documentation on the other;

(c) In addition to a knowledge of new techniques, Latin America requires a rapid flow of information on external economic phenomena which affect its development, such as, the situation of markets

^{3/} The following documents were presented at the Meeting of Experts on Documentation held by ECLA on 25 and 26 September 1970: Freiherr von Ledebur, "Working paper on organization of regional networks of information and documentation and their relation to the world networks"; Rafael Rodríguez Delgado, "Model of a regional information and documentation network for Latin America"; Nota sobre centros regionales y nacionales de documentación en América Latina; and Informe sobre los debates y recomendaciones.

capable of absorbing its products and the legislation affecting it, which entails, inter alia, contacts with mechanized sources of information and the acquisition of up-to-date techniques, such as electronic data-processing, microfiches, etc.

III. OBJECTIVES OF CLADES

5. The Centre is planning to use the most up-to-date technology in order to supply information and documentation on economic and social subjects to specific individual and collective users, i.e., research specialists of ECLA, ILPES and other agencies, thus becoming a centre of attraction to scholars in Latin America and other regions.

6. Its main functions will comprise the acquisition of materials which are relatively difficult to obtain, analyses, terminology control, recording of the results of analyses, storage of basic material in microfiches and computers, analysis and preparation of requests for information for its mechanized retrieval, search and strategy of the search of documentation, general and selective transmission of its results, and promotion of the establishment of national documentation centres. The processing in depth of the documentation generated in ECLA and related institutions and versions of such documentation on magnetic tape and microfiche will provide a useful means of exchange in order to have access to the most up-to-date sources of documentation, among which the United Nations agencies are increasingly prominent. Intercommunication between national, regional and world documentation centres and the provision of reciprocal services should result in the organization of information networks that will make it possible to take full advantage of the scarce resources available in this sphere and to provide a better service to users concerned with Latin America's economic and social development.

/IV. ORGANIZATION

IV. ORGANIZATION

7. The new Centre will consist of the following organs:

Executive Secretary of ECLA: The Executive Secretary is the highest authority of the Latin American Centre for Economic and Social Documentation, and it is incumbent upon him to decide the Centre's over-all policy, appoint its staff and allocate resources for its establishment and operation.

Advisory Committee: The Advisory Committee, whose President is the Executive Secretary of ECLA, or his representative, is composed of a representative of ILPES, the Director of the Centre, three representatives of ECLA divisions or units appointed by the Executive Secretary, the ECLA Librarian and a representative of the Division of Administration.

Its functions include the provision of advisory services in budgetary matters and in connexion with the Centre's work plans, and advisory assistance to the Executive Secretary with respect to the policy and general rules governing the Centre's operation.

Director of the Centre: The Director of the Centre, in line with the over-all policy laid down by the Executive Secretary of ECLA, will carry out the approved work programmes and direct the reference and documentation services provided to ECLA and ILPES divisions, and agencies concerned with social and economic planning and development in Latin America.

V. CLADES WORK PLAN AND PROGRAMME

Work plan

8. CLADES activities are interrelated and integrated, although they are highly flexible in that they can be adapted to changing circumstances and new programmes according to financing needs and the new sources of financing to which access is obtained. This over-all plan will be put into practice by means of the following programmes.

Programme 1 - Purchases

9. The main purpose of this programme is to set up a reference library to respond to consultations from the entities and officials concerned.

10. The reference library will consist of collections of abstracts of articles from periodicals, directories of institutions, yearbooks, documentation and information centre handbooks, lists of bibliographic services and other general reference works, provided they do not overlap with those already in ECLA's possession.

Programme 2 - Central archives and registers

11. The purpose is to organize several card-indexes in order to obtain information and documentation on areas which are not covered by the existing services.

Programme 3 - Documentation

12. Preparation of analyses and summaries of documents of particular interest for economic and social development in Latin America. Several subprogrammes will be carried out first. One will deal with ECLA documentation for computer-processing. Another will consist of cataloguing and classifying reports of technical assistance and Special Fund experts in ECLA's possession, and will be co-ordinated with the Headquarters Project Reports Information Subsystem (PRIS). Subprogrammes will also be carried out for ECLA projects consisting in determining bibliographic sources, analysing articles from periodicals, and other documentation activities.

/Programme 4

Programme 4 - Descriptors

13. Work will be completed on the translation into Spanish of the Common list of Descriptors of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, for which OECD has granted a subsidy. This project is well under way and will be concluded in the second half of 1971.

14. Analyses will be made of documents as a means of obtaining, with the collaboration of the relevant divisions, a list of ECLA descriptors that will reflect the situation and interests of Latin America, which will be correlated with the OECD Common List and other lists of international organizations and specialized agencies with a view to their interconnexion.

Programme 5 - Users

15. Preparation of profiles of users, a programme which is closely related to the documentation programme. The purpose is a selective distribution of the documentation.

Programme 6 - Electronic data-processing

16. ECLA has carried out a number of studies on electronic data-processing ^{4/} and CLADES is engaged in a study as a basis for electronic data retrieval in Santiago. Information on fourteen data-processing programmes has also been obtained on magnetic tape. It has been supplied free of charge by OECD, and is being studied with a view to adapting the programmes to local conditions.

^{4/} Oscar A. Varsavsky, "Report on electronic computer requirements of ECLA", (26 July 1968); ECLA Public Administration Unit, "Considerations on the installation of a computer centre in ECLA (June 1970); Gunnar A. Berggren, "Report on visit to Santiago, Chile, 8 to 30 April 1970"; and Robert Mantz, "Need for and viability of a United Nations computation centre in Santiago" (Santiago, 21 June 1970).

Programme 7 - Microfiche system

17. There are no local facilities for installing a system for the preparation of microfiches, and it is planned to contract this service abroad. The present budget would allow of ECLA's yearly output of documents to be copied in microfiche. A minimum of fifty copies of each text would be obtained, mainly for exchange with other microfiche systems and selective distribution to international and government agencies.

Programme 8 - Meetings

18. CLADES intends to initiate a programme of lectures on information and documentation by experts on the subject. A meeting on modern information and documentation techniques is in course of preparation to examine more up-to-date, expeditious and efficient methods of acquiring processing and disseminating economic and social information and documentation.

Programme 9 - Documentation networks

19. Contacts have been initiated with a view to establishing information and documentation networks composed of international agencies and national documentation centres in order to co-ordinate and regulate the respective activities and achieve a rapid and efficient exchange of data.

Programme 10 - Publications

20. The Centre is launching its publication programme with the present study, which is to be followed by others - in course of preparation - on descriptors and their use, and on modern information and documentation techniques. Several studies relating to the preparatory stage of the Centre have been reissued, e.g., Dr. Verhoeven's feasibility studies and documents presented at the Meeting of Experts on Documentation on 25 and 26 September 1970.

Building

21. ECLA has already appointed the architects who are to plan the future CLADES building in accordance with the specifications contained in the study by Dr. Verhoeven and other supplementary studies.
22. It is hoped that a building of not less than 1,200 square metres, with the proper modern facilities and equipment for CLADE's work, will be completed by the end of 1972.